

Letter to the Community # 6

April 28, 2020

I don't know about you, but I am more comfortable when it is raining! Folks who have seasonal allergies will agree with me, because we sneeze less when the pollen count is lower. Fewer stares from others! No matter the reason, always cover your cough and sneezes!!

Where are we on our journey in this COVID pandemic? If we were in a marathon of 26.2 miles, we are probably around the 13.1-mile mark! Half way, YAY!! We are tired. We want it to be over. We continually question our decision to start this marathon. For all of us, however, we really did not have a choice. We were pulled into this marathon without a lot of preparation or warning. We have learned and adjusted along the way and now we need to continue the grueling trek back home. Unfortunately, this particular marathon does not move in a straight line. An important thing to keep in mind is that at any time we may get sent back to an earlier mile marker and have further to go. The silver lining is that we are all becoming better at this, and better at supporting one another through the ups and downs. We've got this.

For Thurston County, the pandemic curve has flattened, thanks to all our sacrifices. Elsewhere in Washington State people are all experiencing different levels of the pandemic. Some communities are just seeing their first few cases, while others have seen their cases declining, and still others are having a big spike up in their cases. The bottom line is that it is not yet time to ease up on all our restrictions. With our very mobile community, it will not take long for cases to be reintroduced into our community once movement starts up again.

You heard the Governor last week [lift restrictions on home construction](#) and yesterday on some limited outdoor recreation. State parks, state lands, and state fish & wildlife areas are open, provided that security protocols and social distancing are in place. He stressed that this is, "not a return to normal." Camping is not open, and people are being encouraged to stay local and only recreate with the people in their household.

Taking a very measured approach to easing restrictions allows us more time to make sure we can be ready for a resurgence in cases. To feel confident, the Public Health workforce must be ready to act fast to identify cases, do contact tracing, and provide services for families that will be put into isolation or quarantine. We are ready! There needs to be more testing available and though we have more test kits, we still do not have enough to test everyone that wants a test. Right now, anyone who has symptoms can get tested. Symptoms can include fever, new cough, or difficulty breathing. Other patients also complain of severe fatigue, sore throat, and a new loss of sense of smell or taste. If you have 3 or more of these symptoms, call your provider and request to be tested or call ahead to the [Providence St Peter's Hospital "Drive Through" testing site in Hawks Prairie](#). The phone number is: 360-486-6800. When you have symptoms, remember to isolate yourself from others. Those that live in the same household with you should stay home too until you learn of your test results and receive further guidance from your doctor or Thurston County Public Health officials.

What will the new "normal" look like? Definitely, we will need to continue social distancing from each other, staying at least 6 feet apart. People will need to find creative ways of greeting friends without the customary handshakes. Washing our hands or using hand sanitizer before we touch our face. Covering

our cough and even wearing a cloth face covering (homemade mask) in public. Staying home when we are sick needs to be part of our normal routine.

As much as we want to party, gather, and socialize, please remember that we are still in the middle of a pandemic. Be sure to pick up the phone and call some of your friends that are more isolated. The [Thurston County mental health web page](#) has resources for folks who need help coping with isolation. This is a pandemic virus that has no cure, no treatment, and no vaccine yet. We can continue to take control of our own health and safety. For now, that is staying home as much as you possible can. If you need to be out and about, stay at least 6 feet away from others and keep washing those hands.

Thank you for all you do.

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